

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2014

Mr. Bob Krumenaker
Acting Superintendent
Everglades National Park
40001 State Road 9336
Homestead, FL 33034

Dear Acting Superintendent Krumenaker:

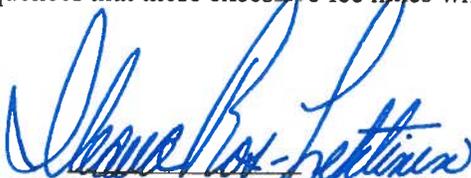
We, Members of the South Florida Congressional delegation, are **greatly concerned over recently proposed fee increases at Everglades National Park and the rushed and inadequate public engagement process that will surely stifle and marginalize public comment and participation.** Our community is proud to have this magnificent natural treasure as part of our local and cultural heritage, and these hefty fee hikes would undoubtedly erode our community's access and special connection to this resource – with minimal notice.

This unique and internationally recognized ecosystem receives over a million visitors annually. A majority of these visits stem from tourism, both international and domestic, yet our local residents still account for a quarter of all park entrances. While tourists traveling explicitly to see the Everglades may not be discouraged by these substantial proposed fees, local South Florida residents certainly would be.

The park has long served as an affordable recreational and educational destination for generations of South Florida families and their children. We are a proudly diverse community that encompasses many cost-conscious, hardworking middle class families where every dollar counts. A family outing that nearly triples in price, as proposed in these new park entrance fees alone, would prove prohibitive to many.

Under normal circumstances there is significant public notice followed by ample opportunities for interested stakeholders and the community to participate in these decisions. In this instance though, the park is pursuing an unrealistic and flawed timetable that will evade honest dialogue with residents and local park users. **With the entirety of the public comment period closing scarcely a month after the first statement that these fee hikes were being discussed, and with only three public forums scheduled to be held, the park is seemingly more interested in going through the motions of engagement than actively and sincerely seeking input on its plans.**

In accordance with all applicable rules and regulations, we encourage you to make every available effort to engage residents of our community in this major proposal and consider the negative consequences that these excessive fee hikes will have on local families' access to **their** park.


Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Sincerely,


Mario Diaz-Balart

IRL: jhs